

Message Text

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15

ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 INRE-00 AID-20 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-09

H-02 INR-09 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01

SS-14 USIA-12 OMB-01 OPR-02 SY-07 SSO-00 RSR-01 /108 W
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P R 241200 Z MAR 73

FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8447

INFO AMEMBASSY DACCA

AMEMBASSY KABUL

AMCONSUL KARACHI

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

AMCONSUL LAHORE

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E. O. 11652: N/ A

TAGS: PINT, IK

SUBJECT: INTERNAL POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS: CLASH
BETWEEN OPPOSITION AND GOVERNMENT SUPPORTERS

REF: ISLAMABAD 2304

SUMMARY: SHOOTING BROKE OUT AS UNITED DEMOCRATIC FRONT (UDF)
OF OPPOSITION PARTIES GATHERED FOR PUBLIC MEETING IN
RAWALPINDI MARCH 23. CASUALTIES INCLUDED SEVERAL DEAD.
PREDICTABLY, OPPOSITION AND GOVERNMENT HAVE EACH ACCUSED
OTHER PARTY OF CREATING INCIDENT. GOP, IF IT DID NOT
SPONSOR DISTURBANCES, AS IS LIKELY, TOOK NO PREVENTIVE

ACTION. PRIOR TO INCIDENT, DEGREE OF COMPROMISE WAS
EVIDENT BETWEEN POLITICAL OPPOSITION AND BHUTTO CENTERING
ON CONSTITUTION. HOWEVER, IN WAKE MARCH 23 INCIDENT,
UDF HAS ANNOUNCED BOYCOTT OF CONSTITUTION MAKING PROCESS.
END SUMMARY

1. POLITICAL OPPOSITION TO BHUTTO GOVERNMENT GATHERED

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UNDER UMBRELLA OF UNITED DEMOCRATIC FRONT SCHEDULED FIRST PUBLIC MEETING ON MARCH 23 IN RAWALPINDI. MEETING, BILLED AS OCCASION FOR IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT, FOLLOWED FIRST MILITARY PARADE IN CAPITAL SINCE 1970 (AND WHICH BROUGHT OUT VERY LARGE CROWD). UDF PRESIDENT PIR OF PAGARO WAS TO PRESIDE OVER MEETING WHILE SPEAKERS INCLUDED PRINCIPALS FROM VARIOUS OPPOSITION PARTIES AND GROUPS: KHAN ABDUL WALI KHAN OF NAP, MIAN TUFAIL MOHAMMAD OF JAMAAT- I- ISLAMI, MAULANA MUFTI MAHMUD OF JAMIATUL- ULEMA- I- PSLAM, ETC.

2. ALTHOUGH DETAILS ARE STILL SCANTY, DISTURBANCES AT MEETING RESULTED IN AT LEAST SEVEN DEAD AND SEVENTY- FIVE PERSONS INJURED (GOP OFFICIAL FIGURES); OTHER UNCONFIRMED SOURCES REPORT HIGHER CASUALTIES. NUMBER OF BUSES WHICH HAD BROUGHT PATHANS TO MEETING WERE BURNED OUT, AND OFFICES OF JAMAAT- I- ISLAMI LOCATED IN VICINITY OF MEETING PLACE WERE RANSACKED, SINCE DISTURBANCES AT OPPOSITION MEETINGS BY PRO- GOVERNMENT SUPPORTERS HAVE BECOME COMMONPLACE AND COMPONENT PARTIES OF UDF WEAK IN RAWALPINDI ORGANIZERS APPARENTLY BROUGHT IN SEVERAL HUNDRED NAP SYMPATHIZERS FROM NWFP TO ACT AS SECURITY FOR MEETING. EVIDENTLY, NUMBER OF THESE WERE ARMED. (COMMENT: PUNJAB GOVERNOR KHAR TOLD CHARGE EVENING MARCH 22 HE HAD GRANTED PERMISSION FOR RALLY DESPITE FACT HE " ALWAYS" EXPECTED TROUBLE WHEN OPPOSITION HELD PUBLIC MEETINGS, AND DESPITE FACT THAT POLICE WOULD BE " EXTREMELY THIN" MARCH 23 DUE TO NUMBER OF PUBLIC MEETINGS TO COMMEMORATE PAKISTAN DAY. IN FACT, MILITARY POLICE HELPED CONTROL CROWD AT PAKISTAN PARADE ATTENDED BY BHUTT IN MORNING, AND THERE MORE THAN ADEQUATE TIME FOR POLICE TO SHIFT LOCATIONS FOR AFTERNOON MEETING.) NOT CLEAR HOW VIOLENCE STARTED ALTHOUGH GOP ALLEGES THAT " REDSHIRTS" OPENED FIRE.

3. RAWALPIMDI INCIDENT OCCURRED DAY AFTER DISCUSSIONS BETWEEN BHUTTO AND EX- GOVERNOR OF BALUCHISTAN BIZENJO OF NAP ABOUT UDF/ GOVERNMENT POSITIONS ON CONSTITUTION AND UDF DEMAND THAT BALUCHISTAN PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLY (WHERE NAP AND ITS PARTNER JUI HAVE MAJORITY) BE CONVENED.

ACCORDING TO KARACHI INDEPENDENT DAILY DAWN, BHUTTO
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PROMISED REPLY TO QUESTION OF BALUCHISTAN ASSEMBLY BY

MARCH 24 AND TO UDF DEMANDS BY MARCH 25. DAWN QUOTED UDF SOURCES AS STATING THAT BIZENJO HAD BEEN INSTRUCTED TO INFORM PRESIDENT THAT UDF DID NOT WISH CONFRONTATION, " BUT WOULD FIGHT BACK IF IT WAS PUSHED TO THE WALL."

4. AT PRESS CONFERENCE MARCH 24, PIR OF PAGARO ANNOUNCED UDF WOULD BOYCOTT REMAINDER OF CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY MEETINGS ON CONSTITUTION, AND CALLED UPON ALL " SYMPATHETIC MEMBERS OF PPP" TO JOIN IN BOYCOTT. PRESS CONFERENCE WAS ATTENDED BY ALL UDF LEADERS EXCEPT NAP LEADER WALI KHAN, WHO DEPARTED FOR PESHAWAR AFTERNOON MARCH 23. HIR SAID UDF HAD NOT WAITED FOR OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENT FROM BHUTTO CONCERNING HIS RESPONSE TO UDF DEMANDS BECAUSE " BHUTTO HAS CHOSEN TO ANSWER US WITH BULLETS."

5. COMMENT: UNCLEAR WHY GOP CHOSE NOT TO PREVENT DISTURBANCES (OR ENCOURAGED AND ORGANIZED THEM). ANSWER MAY BE SIMPLY THAT BY USE STRONG- ARM TACTIC BHUTTO HOPED DEMORALIZE UDF NOW RATHER THAN WAIT FOR MORE SUBTLE TACTICS AGAINST FRONT TO TAKE EFFECT. HOWEVER, APPARENT THAT SUCH DISTURBANCES WOULD RESULT IN OPPOSITION BOYCOTT OF CONSTITUTION MAKING PROCESS. BHUTTO MAY HAVE DECIDED THAT UDF TERMS UNACCEPTABLE, BOYCOTT THEREBY INEVITABLE, AND MEETING PROVIDED TOO GOOD TARGET TO DEMONSTRATE PPP'S " TAKING TO THE STREETS" TACTICS TO BE IGNORED. SINCE UDF HAS TALKED IN SUCH TERMS UNLESS BHUTTO ACCEPTED THEIR DEMANDS, BEATING OPPOSITION AT THEIR OWN STRATEGY MAY HAVE HAD CERTAIN APPEAL. FOR ITS PART, UDF, BY PROVIDING GUARDS FROM FRONTIER, CLEARLY RECOGNIZED RISKS IN HOLDING MEETING IN PPP DOMINATED RAWALPINDI. OPPOSITION MAY WELL HAVE HOPED THAT MEETING WOULD BRING RESULTS IT DID IN ORDER LEND WEIGHT TO OPPOSITION CLAIMS THAT ONLY OPPOSITION STANDS BETWEEN BHUTTO ASSUMING DICTATORIAL POWERS. WHATEVER REASONS LIE BEHIND BOTH PARTIES ACTIONS, POSSIBILITIES OF CONSENSUS ON CONSTITUTION PROBABLY SET BACK AND POLITICAL ANIMOSITIES DEEPENED BY RAWALPINDI INCIDENT.

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TAGS: PINT, PK

To: NEA

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KABUL

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